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General Wins \$2 Million Libel Suit

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A U.S. District Court judge has awarded \$2 million in damages to deputy assistant secretary of defense Maj. Gen. Richard V. Secord in a libel and slander suit Secord brought against a former aide to ex-CIA agent Edwin P. Wilson.

Secord sued former Wilson aide Douglas M. Schlachter last November, alleging that Schlachter falsely linked him to Wilson in a CBS television broadcast in late 1981.

The 51-year-old Air Force general said Schlachter's allegations caused him to lose a promotion and damaged his reputation.

Schlachter pleaded guilty last year to criminal charges connected with his role in helping Wilson ship explosives to Libya, and was sentenced in January to six months in prison.

Prosecutors said yesterday that Schlachter, who was in the federal witness protection program, is now serving that sentence in an undisclosed federal prison. His lawyer could not be reached for comment.

In a brief opinion, Judge June L. Green said she ordered a default judgment against Schlachter after he was served papers in the suit but failed to respond.

In a formal opinion released yesterday, Green said Schlachter knew when he made them that the allegations involving dealings between Secord and Wilson were "completely false."

Schlachter's allegations caused Secord and his family "great embarrassment and strain," Green said. The allegations adversely affected his chances for promotion, she said,

and have caused him to consider resigning from the military at the end of this month.

After CBS broadcast the allegations, the Department of Defense withdrew an offer to promote Secord to three-star general and placed him on indefinite leave for about four months before deciding the allegations were "without merit," Green said.

In addition, Green said Francis J. West, the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, testified that Secord was in line to become director of the Defense Security Assistance Agency last fall, but West was told that such a promotion would not be possible because of Schlachter's allegations.

Secord could not be reached for comment yesterday. His attorney, Thomas C. Green, said Schlachter's "assets are unknown, but we will make efforts to determine what they are."



MAJ. GEN. RICHARD V. SECORD
... claims career was damaged